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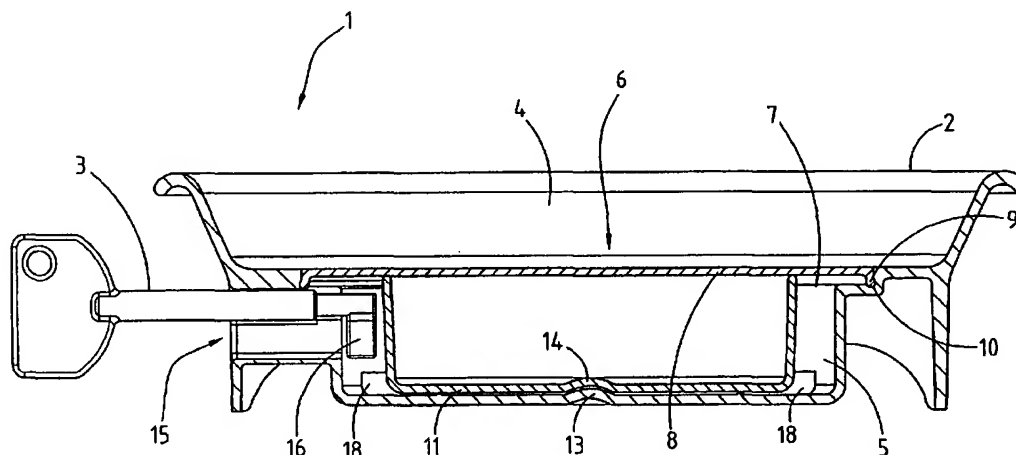
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(54) Title: FOOD CONTAINER WITH UNLOCKING ELEMENT



(57) Abstract: Container (2) intended for accommodating foods, at least comprising a first compartment (4) and a second compartment (5), which compartments are separated from each other by a partition (6), the first compartment (4) being intended for accommodating the foods, and the second compartment (5) being a substantially closed compartment (5) which has in one of its walls an opening (7) with a lid (8) which is lockable by means of a locking means (9, 10), it being possible to unlock the locking means (9, 10) with the aid of an unlocking element (3) through an unlocking opening (15) intended for the purpose in the outsider of the container (2).



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Short title: FOOD CONTAINER WITH UNLOCKING ELEMENT

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The present invention relates first of all to a container intended for accommodating foods, at least comprising a first compartment and a second compartment, which compartments are separated from each other by a partition, the first compartment being intended for accommodating the foods, and the second compartment
10 being a substantially closed compartment which has in one of its walls an opening with a lid which is lockable with the aid of locking means.

Such a container is known in the prior art and is described in, for example, WO-A-97/00820. This container is intended in particular for accommodating foods such as desserts or the like for children. The first compartment can contain, for example,
15 yoghurt, and the second compartment a surprise. When the child has eaten up the yoghurt, a lid in the bottom of the container can be opened by pressing down the bottom of the first compartment. This allows access to the second compartment containing the surprise.

Many other kinds of such containers are known in the prior art, their important
20 object being to influence the eating behaviour of children in a positive way. The second compartment generally contains a reward for the child.

A problem of such containers according to the prior art is that the unlocking of the locking means for opening the lid in the wall of the second compartment is generally complicated for children. Children also sometimes injure themselves when opening such
25 *lids. In addition, in the case of the known containers the play element for children in opening of the lid is minimal.*

In the case of the container according to the abovementioned PCT application pressure must be exerted on the bottom of the first compartment, in order to unlock the locking means of the lid. This means that a child has to press with its hand or with a
30 spoon or another piece of cutlery against the bottom of the first compartment, which can give rise to injuries or messy hands.

Containers in the case of which a lid has to be opened using a sharp object are also known. It will be clear that such embodiments are very undesirable, especially for children.

The object of the present invention is to provide a container of the type mentioned in the preamble which is generally improved and does not have the abovementioned problems. To that end, said container according to the invention is characterized in that the locking means can be unlocked with the aid of an unlocking
5 element through an unlocking opening intended for the purpose in the outside of the container.

The advantage of a separate unlocking element is that, for example, a parent can keep said unlocking element until the child has eaten all or a satisfactory amount of the meal or other food from the container. The child can then in a playful manner simply
10 and safely release the locking means with the aid of the unlocking element, remove the lid from the opening in the wall of the second compartment, and take the surprise or the like out of the compartment.

In particular, the lid interacts with an opening in the partition. The first compartment is preferably situated on top of the second compartment, and the partition
15 comprises the bottom of the first compartment.

In practice, it has been found that the eating behaviour of children is influenced very positively if the access to the second compartment can be achieved only through the first compartment. In other words, that access to the surprise is achieved through the first compartment from which the child has eaten the food. Moreover, in that case all the food
20 has to be eaten from the container first before the lid can be removed from the bottom.

The lid is advantageously a disc-shaped part which can be snapped into a suitably designed opening in a wall of the second compartment.

A snap connection is a very simple connection, which can be designed in such a way that it cannot be opened from the first compartment with the aid of a spoon or the
25 like. The locking means can be released in a simple manner with the aid of a simple unlocking element, for example by direct contact with the lid itself. This embodiment will be explained in greater detail below in the description of the figures.

It will, however, be clear that many other locking means can be used for locking the lid in the opening in the wall of the second compartment.

30 In an advantageous embodiment, the unlocking element comprises a key, and the container is provided with a keyhole.

It goes without saying that the locking means can be a conventional lock, but in particular the key comprises a bit, which during use can release the unlocking means of the lid by direct contact between the bit and the lid. In other words, through turning the

key the bit is pressed against the lid, and the latter is released from the snap connection or the like. This embodiment will also be explained in greater detail in the description of the figures.

5 Foods for children, apart from desserts or the like, can, of course, also comprise hot meals, bread, soup etc.

If a dessert is placed as a surprise in the second compartment and a hot meal is placed in the first compartment, there is a risk that the dessert will be heated by the hot meal. Bearing this in mind, the second compartment is advantageously insulated at least locally. Such insulation can be carried out very simply by, for example, the second
10 compartment having a double wall, or by using insulating material.

The container according to the invention is not particularly limited and can be designed in the form of tub-shaped containers, dish-shaped containers, plate-shaped containers etc. However, the container preferably comprises a child's plate.

In particular, the lid is designed in such a way that a liquid-tight seal of the
15 opening in the wall of the second compartment is obtained. In this way it becomes possible to accommodate liquid foods, such as porridge and soup, in the first compartment.

The material from which the container according to the invention is manufactured is not particularly limited. However, the various parts are preferably made
20 of plastic.

In a special embodiment of the invention, the first compartment of the container contains a food and a closure, and a child's surprise is accommodated in the second compartment. An example of this is a dessert tub with a removable closure on the first compartment, such as, for example, a metallized film or metal foil.

25 It goes without saying that the contents of the second compartment, the child's surprise, are not limited either, and can vary from plastic toy articles, plastic dolls, coins and the like to sweets, cakes etc.

The invention also provides an assembly of a container according to the invention and an unlocking element intended for it.

30 The invention will be explained in greater detail below with reference to the appended drawing, in which:

Fig. 1 shows the cross section of a container according to the invention, in the form of a child's plate;

Fig. 2 shows a partial cross section in perspective view of the container according to Fig. 1, in the disassembled state; and

Fig. 3 shows an enlarged detail of the unlocking part of the container according to Fig. 1.

5 In Fig. 1 an assembly according to the invention is indicated by 1, said assembly comprising a child's plate 2 and an unlocking element in the form of a key 3.

The child's plate 2 comprises a first compartment 4, for accommodating foods, and a second compartment 5, for a surprise. The two compartments 4, 5 are separated from each other by a partition 6. The partition 6 also forms the bottom of the first
10 compartment 4.

An opening 7 is present in the bottom 6 of the first compartment 4, which opening is closed by means of a lid 8.

The lid 8 comprises on the outside a circumferential flange 9 with a snap edge, which interacts in a snapping manner with a circumferential recess 10 in the bottom 6 of
15 the first compartment 4. If desired, sealing means may also be present at the position of said snap connection, in order to make the plate suitable for liquid foods such as soup and the like.

A bowl 11 is accommodated in the second compartment 5, said bowl being provided with lips 12, which serve as handles to permit easy removal of the bowl from
20 the compartment 5. A centring lug 13 is also present on the bottom of the compartment 5, in order to position the bowl 11 with the aid of corresponding deformation 14 in the bottom of the bowl 11.

Spacers 18 on the bottom of the second compartment 5 serve to position the bowl 11 in the second compartment 5. In this way an insulating space is created between the
25 bowl 11 and the outside wall of the second compartment 5.

An unlocking opening, in the form of a keyhole 15, is present in the outside of the container 2. The key 3 can be moved through said keyhole 15 into the second compartment 5 between the bowl 11 and the wall of the compartment 5 and, by turning of the key 3, the bit 16 of the key 3 can be brought into contact with the lid 8, in order to
30 release the latter from the snap connection.

The various parts of the child's plate according to Fig. 1 are shown disassembled in partial cross section and in perspective view in Fig. 2.

At the time of use, a parent can place a surprise for a child, for example a dessert, in the bowl 11. The lid 8 is subsequently snapped into the opening 7 in the bottom 6 of

the first compartment 4. A hot meal or soup or the like can then be placed in the first compartment of the plate.

When the child has eaten all of the meal or the soup, the parent can give the child the key 3. The key 3 can be easily inserted into the keyhole 15 by the child. Through
5 turning of the key 3 in any desired direction, the child can release the lid 8 and remove it. The child can then take the bowl 11 by the lips 12 intended for the purpose and remove it from the second compartment 5. If the bowl contains, for example, a dessert, the bowl 11 can also be left in the second compartment, and the child can therefore eat the dessert from the same plate.

10 By making slight adjustments to the container according to the invention shown in the figure, said container can also be designed as, for example, a dessert container or a drinking cup. Moreover, apart from a first and a second compartment, several compartments can also be added, either for accommodating foods separately or for accommodating various surprises. A container according to the invention could, for
15 example, likewise be designed in the form of a money box.

CLAIMS

1. Container (2) intended for accommodating foods, at least comprising a first compartment (4) and a second compartment (5), which compartments are separated from each other by a partition (6), the first compartment (4) being intended for accommodating the foods, and the second compartment (5) being a substantially closed compartment (5) which has in one of its walls an opening (7) with a lid (8) which is lockable by means of locking means (9, 10), characterized in that the locking means (9, 10) can be unlocked with the aid of an unlocking element (3) through an unlocking opening (15) intended for the purpose in the outside of the container (2).
2. Container according to Claim 1, characterized in that the lid (8) interacts with an opening (7) in the partition (6).
3. Container according to Claim 1 or 2, characterized in that the first compartment (4) is situated on top of the second compartment (5), and the partition comprises the bottom (6) of the first compartment (4).
4. Container according to one or more of the preceding claims, characterized in that the lid (8) is a disc-shaped part which can be snapped into a suitably designed opening (7) in a wall of the second compartment (5).
5. Container according to one or more of the preceding claims, characterized in that the unlocking element (3) comprises a key, and the container (2) is provided with a keyhole (15).
6. Container according to Claim 5, characterized in that the key (3) comprises a bit (16), which during use can release the unlocking means (9, 10) of the lid (8) by direct contact between the bit (16) and the lid (8).
7. Container according to one or more of the preceding claims, characterized in that the second compartment (5) is insulated at least locally.
8. Container according to one or more of the preceding claims, characterized in that the container comprises a child's plate.
9. Container according to one or more of the preceding claims, characterized in that the first compartment (4) of the container (2) comprises a food and a closure, and a child's surprise is accommodated in the second compartment (5).
10. Assembly (1) of a container (2) according to one or more of the preceding claims, and an unlocking element (3) intended for said container.

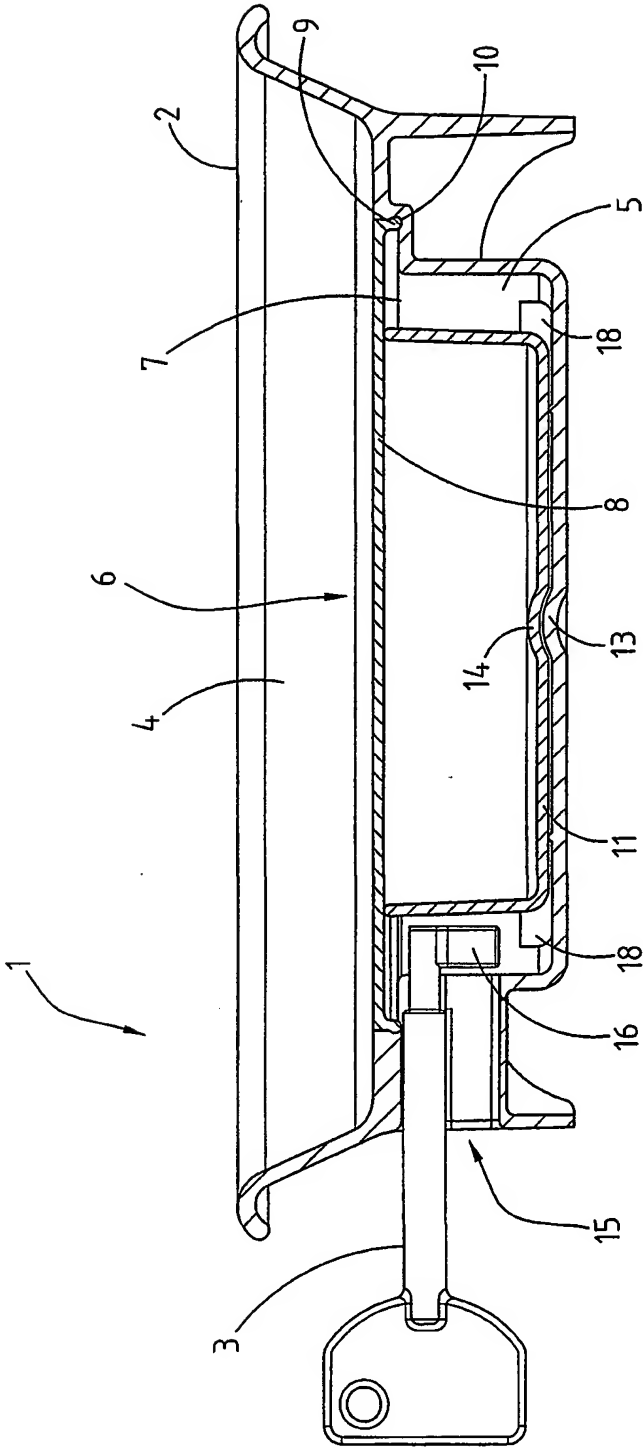
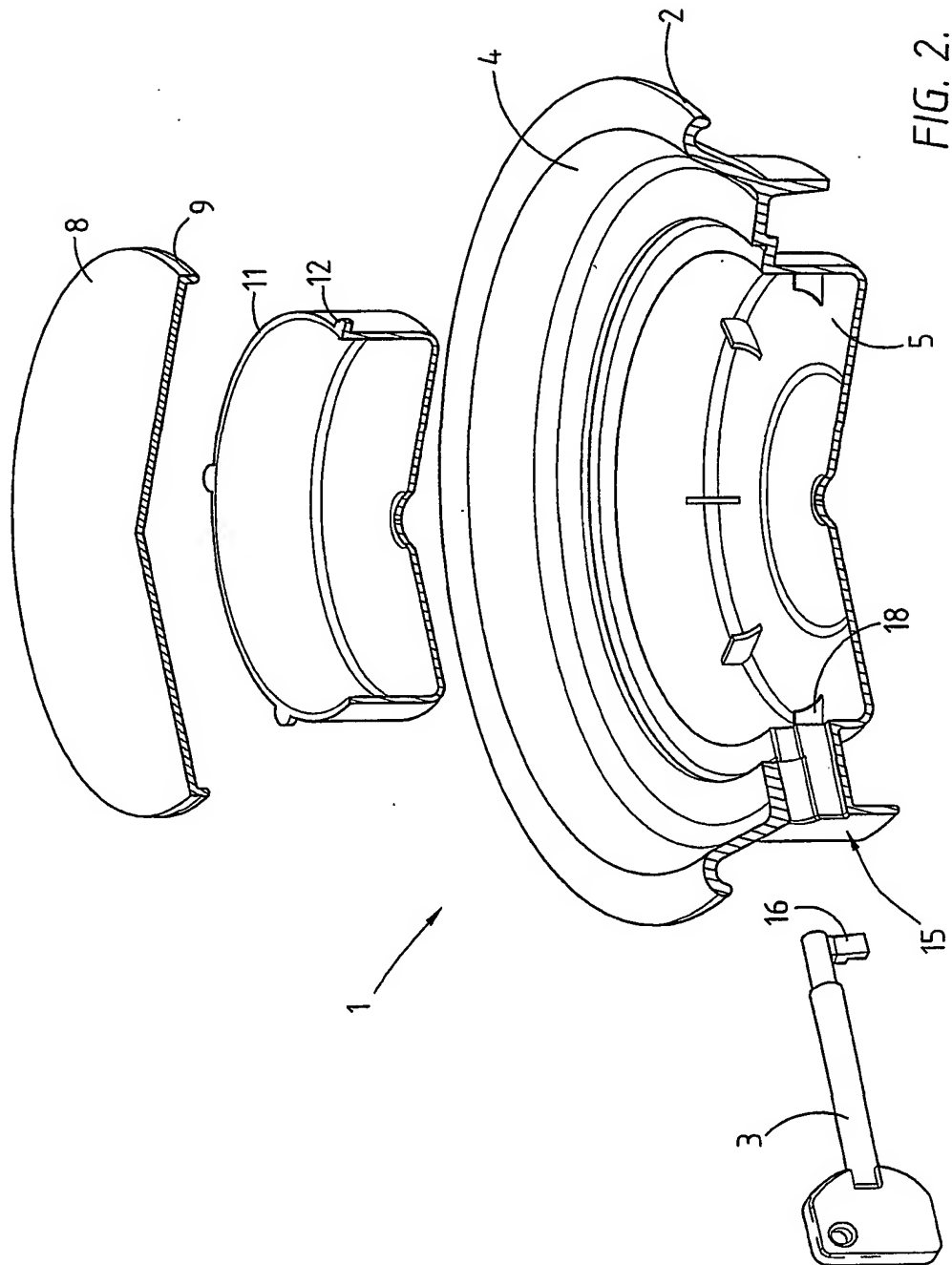
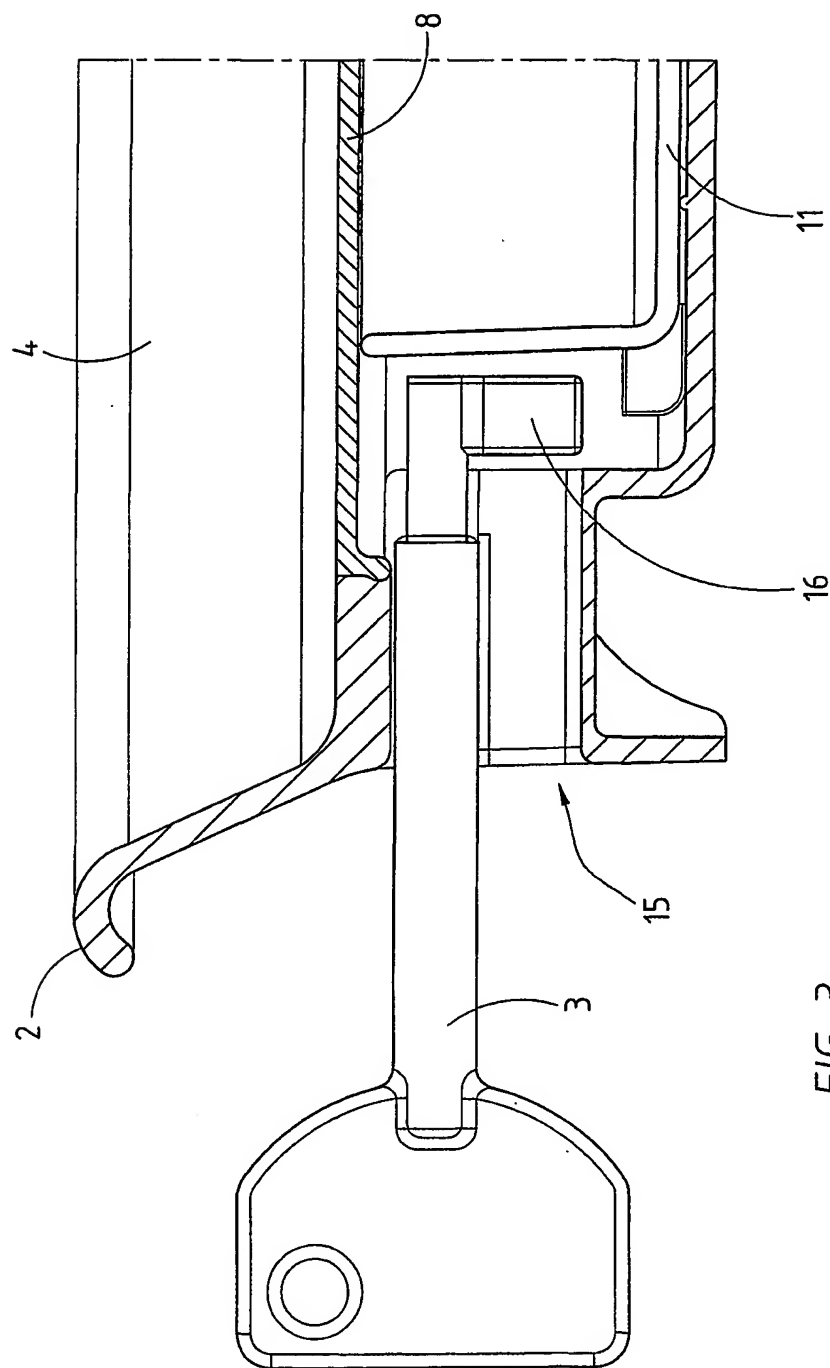


FIG. 1.





INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

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Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

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C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 2 213 837 A (GILL) 3 September 1940 (1940-09-03) column 1, line 21 -column 2, line 27; figures 1,2,4	1-4,8-10
A	US 4 756 446 A (GEN) 12 July 1988 (1988-07-12) column 2, line 55-58; figures 1-9	7
A	US 2 561 594 A (POKRAS) 24 July 1951 (1951-07-24) column 1-2; figures 1-3	1

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G document member of the same patent family

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

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Patent document cited in search report		Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
US 2213837	A	03-09-1940	NONE	
US 4756446	A	12-07-1988	NONE	
US 2561594	A	24-07-1951	NONE	